

LB 336  
March 16, 1973

CLERK: There were 42 present earlier.

SENATOR SAVAGE: Although, this shouldn't be controversial bill. It may develop into one and I'd like to have a full attendance to hear it though.

PRESIDENT: It is your pleasure, Senator. You make the motion as to whether you want it debated or not.

SENATOR SAVAGE: I'll hear the amendments, first.

PRESIDENT: All right. Senator Luedtke with the Committee amendments.

SENATOR LUEDTKE: I move the adoption of the Committee amendments. Mr. President, members of the Legislature, what the Committee amendments do is they define after "person", this is on Page 4, line 9, after "person", they more clearly define that a person engaged in procuring, gathering, writing, editing, or disseminating news or other information to the public. This was to state who would come under this law. It was felt that there was not sufficient definition and that it was too broad and that it would, probably, result in difficulty in finding out who was under it.

PRESIDENT: Any further discussion of the Committee amendments? The question is shall the Committee amendments be adopted. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say no. So ordered. The committee amendments are adopted. Now, Senator Savage, back to you.

SENATOR SAVAGE: I'd like to see this bill carried across the Board, if I could. It was drafted only to allow the free flow of information and not to shield or protect the reporter from making malicious or irresponsible statements about anybody and there are some people who are afraid of it and I'd like to debate it right now, I guess, if I can.

PRESIDENT: Certainly. Your pleasure. Proceed, Senator Savage.

SENATOR SAVAGE: The bill has been blown out of proportion by some people who are afraid that some sinister plot to allow reporters to malign innocent citizens or politicians without recourse on their part. Politicians are still fair game and this bill neither stops nor changes the circumstances regarding the situation. The fact that hurt Senator Eagleton was not the irresponsible reporting of Jack Anderson but the fact that he had been confined to a mental institution without revealing it, was one of the main things on that. I know of no reporter that would withhold information to be able to come up with a scoop or exclusive story of reporting an incident seconds before an attempt to blow up the State House just to have an exclusive story and not to tell how he knew about it. It would, however, prevent Joe Blow from losing his job for exposing graft in a department of government or keep Fred Smith from being fired. Governor Rockefeller, Governor Nelson Rockefeller said that I would rather have a press that sometimes upsets public officials than public officials upsetting freedom of the press, and this bill is sorely needed. Many reporters have gone to jail because of it and I'd like to see this bill passed. I move that it be moved to E & R Initial.

PRESIDENT: The chair recognizes Senator Marsh.

SENATOR MARSH: I'd like to add my effort to pass this along the Board.

PRESIDENT: The chair recognizes Senator Barnett.

SENATOR BARNETT: I have a question of Senator Savage, Mr. President.